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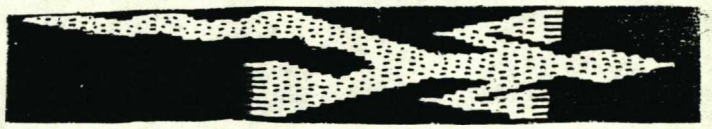


STATEMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON

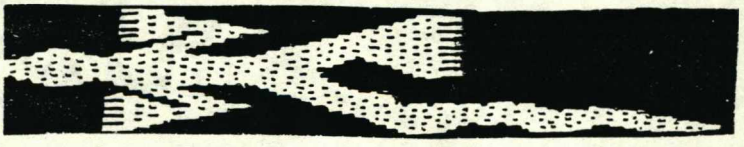
DECOLONISATION

SESSION ON EAST TIMOR

NEW YORK, 27 JULY, L992

LI-LIEN GIBBONS -- EAST TIMOR ALERT NETWORK and

PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR EAST TIMOR



SUBMISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONISATION
NEW YORK, AUGUST 1992

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates:

My name is Li-Lien Gibbons. I am here to represent my family and the East Timor Alert Network of Canada in the hope that justice will at last be brought to the East Timorese people. I became involved with East Timor when my step-brother, Kamal Bamadhaj, was killed in Dili on November 12th 1992. Although I am only a 21 year old university student, it has not taken me long to discover Canada's complicity in the wrong done to the East Timorese people by Indonesia.

Mr. Chairman:

Canada has not only remained silent, but has also actively assisted Indonesia in carrying out its genocidal policies by providing diplomatic, economic and military support. While before 1980 Canada abstained on UN resolutions concerning East Timor, since that time Canada has voted against UN resolutions calling for the immediate withdrawal of Indonesian troops and the right to self-determination for the East Timorese. Additional diplomatic support has also been provided through Canada's efforts to have the East Timor issue removed from UN agendas, including the Human Rights Commission.

Canada has essentially accepted the illegal annexation of East Timor as the 27th province of Indonesia. Canada has a 16 year long history as a generous provider of economic support to the Indonesian military dictatorship. Indonesia is the third largest recipient of Canadian aid dollars, having received at least $400 million in unconditional bilateral aid since 1987. Although Canada suspended $46 million in bilateral aid after the November 12th massacre in East Timor, as a member of the Consultive Group on Indonesia (CGI), it recently contributed towards the group's $4.94 billion multi-lateral aid donation.

The Suharto government has made it all too clear that it rejects any linkage between human rights and aid. This spring Indonesia suspended all Dutch aid due to Holland's policy of conditionality. Canada and many other United Nations countries have always chosen to support the Indonesian regime with aid dollars rather than live up to their human rights rhetoric, much to Indonesia's delight. Meanwhile Canada's consistent attitude has been that there is no point badgering Indonesia since the situation in East Timor is irreversible. This is only true because of the complicity of states such as Canada. This is also only true if the Indonesian government is allowed to continue to defy United Nations resolutions which call on them to withdraw immediately their armed forces from East Timor.

My step-brother, Kamal, a twenty year old student of Malaysian-New Zealand parentage, was shot in Dili, East Timor, last

November 12. He took part in the procession to the Santa Cruz cemetery, together with the handful of journalists and aid workers, with the express purpose of establishing a foreign presence which might prevent the Indonesian military attacking the crowd.

We have information that he was shot by an army unit firing from a truck as he was walking away, alone and unarmed, more than half a kilometre from the cemetery. He was picked up there by an International Red Cross official in a Red Cross vehicle. He had several gunshot wounds but was still conscious.

The Red Cross vehicle was stopped at the police Headquarters and the official was ordered to dump Kamal in the compound and leave. This he refused to do. During the subsequent argument Kamal was bleeding heavily. He died from loss of blood shortly after the Red Cross official managed to get him to a hospital.

We understand that many others were, like Kamal, shot in cold blood after the first rounds of firing at the cemetery, or bled to death because they were denied medical treatment.

Although Kamal's passport and driving license gave his name and Malaysian address, he was buried that same day without any attempt to notify his family. We have not received any explanation of his death from the Indonesian authorities.

These are not the actions of a civilised government.

I am not here because Kamal is any more or less important than any other victim. But I can speak before this Committee without putting other members of my family at risk. East Timorese cannot.

My family and I are not speaking to you as experts on Indonesia, nor are we familiar with United Nations diplomacy and protocol. But since Kamal was killed in Dili, we have learned a lot about East Timor.

We have learned that almost one third of the 1975 population has been killed in military operations or through starvation since the Indonesian invasion in 1975. These are not wild estimates but are supported by statements from the Governor of East Timor and read between the lines of the Indonesian census.

We have read the Amnesty International reports which document a recent upsurge in extra-judicial detentions, beatings and "disappearances". The targets have not been Fretilin guerillas, but students, teachers and civil servants who have dared to criticise the army occupation which controls their lives, suppresses their languages and culture and monopolises economic opportunity.

We have been told that we are lucky to have a body to mourn over. More than 90 East Timorese families are still looking for children they have not seen since last November. Although they

are almost certainly dead and East Timor is a very small place, the authorities have been somehow unable to locate their bodies.

We have read of the long sentences handed down against two East Timorese students who protested the Dili massacre in Jakarta and telephoned friends abroad to report it, thus "shaming" the Indonesian government. We have read of the light sentences handed down against a few Indonesian soldiers who fired on an unarmed procession and committed this "shame". Meanwhile East Timorese who were involved in the Santa Cruz procession have received sentences as heavy as life imprisonment.

If our family, armed with nothing but our grief, can get this information, it is surely available to the expert members of this Special Committee. So we must ask you the layman's question. If a former colony can be invaded by a large neighbour, subjugated with such brutality that one third of its population is wiped out, and still lives in a climate of terror, of political and cultural suppression; if there is no United Nations sanction or action against the occupying power, then what is the function of this Committee ?

We know, of course, that a few key members of the United Nations have accepted the de-facto annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, and had hoped that time and economic progress would pacify the East Timorese. But is such acceptance our prerogative, or yours ? Surely, according to the principles on which this Committee is based, it is the prerogative of the East Timorese to accept or reject integration with Indonesia ?

Dili is just a little town. But there were an estimated three thousand people in that procession by the time it reached the Santa Cruz cemetery. Most of them, like Kamal, were young students. They were the "integrated generation", the product of Indonesian schools and Indonesian development. They knew how the army command handles anti-integration demonstrations. So they risked their lives to tell the world they want their independence.

A lot of words have been spent on exactly how many died on November 12 and subsequently, and what provocation was offered by the marchers. But the real message of Santa Cruz is crystal clear. Integration has failed. The army has now reimposed its "tough line" in east Timor and the territory is, once again, virtually cut off from the outside world. But every new detention and every new death will only mobilise another family against Indonesian rule.

Members of this Special Committee, East Timorese nationalism is not going to go away. In the name of all the young people who gave their lives to bring the East Timor plight to world attention, we appeal to the Special Committee to take action to establish a United Nations presence to stop the continuing extra-judicial detentions and violence in the territory. We beg the United Nations to hold a referendum to give the East Timorese the

opportunity to decide their own future, as has been done in other former colonies under your responsibility.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Helen Todd (Mother)

Haanim

Ms. Haanim Bamadhaj (Sister)

David S. Gibbons

David S. Gibbons(Step-father)

Li-lien Gibbons

Ms. Li-lien Gibbons(Step-sister)